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Tuesday, 23 January 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Umarov	(Kazakhstan)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Tenya
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I should like at the outset to apologize to the members of the Security Council and the Secretariat for the fact that I ruined their siesta today.

We have requested the convening of an open meeting of the Security Council because the issue that we intend to raise is far too important for the discussion to be held in closed consultations. We have nothing to hide. When we discussed Syria in consultations yesterday, many touched on the importance of establishing a new structure to investigate instances of chemical-weapons use in Syria to supplement the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), which fully discredited itself. We have never forgotten this issue, and we have consistently recalled in meetings our readiness to continue consultations on this matter, as noted by Minister Lavrov to the Secretary-General last week. Yesterday, however, we were unable to rise to that call. Today, upon instruction from our capital, it is my honour to report the following.

Russia has consistently stressed the importance of taking the most serious approach to the problem of the manufacture and use of chemical weapons. We are troubled by manifestations of chemical-weapons terrorism in the Middle East, which are not limited to Syrian territory. Unfortunately, the JIM, which no longer exists, caused the collapse of the investigation, which from a scientific and technical perspective was an utter failure and became an instrument for political manipulation. Members of the international community and the Security Council were well aware of the Russian specialists' scrupulous analysis of the conclusions of the JIM.

In an attempt to interpret certain elements of the Russian approach, during consultations on 9 January the United States delegation circulated the relevant document. However, at no point in the document was there even an attempt to approach the matter from a professional standpoint. The so-called refutations of our position do not stand up to any criticism. I invite Council members to familiarize themselves with the material supporting our position in the response that we circulated yesterday as an official Security Council document. Today, incidentally, senior representatives of the United States Department of State made further unfounded accusations alleging that Russia is hindering international verification of the facts of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We have already responded to that, and anyone who wants to can read Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov's comments on the issue. No one has called more than we have for a further investigation — a professional one rather than a simulacrum — into the incidents involving the use of chemical weapons in Syria, and at the moment we are still trying to get the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to send its specialists to Syria to see for themselves the stockpiles of chemical weapons left by militants in liberated areas that the Syrian Government has discovered.

By the way, during yesterday's consultations, following the reports of various recent incidents involving the use of toxic substances in Syria, which have yet to be verified, the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom — without a second's pause or any evidence, let alone an investigation — hastened to declare them the work of what they refer to as the Syrian "regime". Now they are trying to drag Russia into it too. Secretary of State Tillerson brought this up in Paris today at the meeting of the so-called international partnership of States against impunity for the use of chemical weapons, basing his argument on an incident that allegedly occurred yesterday in eastern Ghouta. However, his statement was devoted almost exclusively to Russia. By the way, does nobody find it strange that this alleged incident, whose genuineness has yet to be confirmed — as does the identity of its perpetrators, if it is genuine — coincided very conveniently with the meeting in Paris and the forthcoming Syrian national dialogue conference in Sochi? An amazing coincidence.

Some States are persisting in their attempts to push through an anti-Damascus verdict at the OPCW at all costs, and thereby undermining that respected organization's authority. Others are seeking to scrape together a narrow alliance of anti-impunity-ites through non-legitimate formats.

In November of last year, Russia, working with others of like mind, put together draft resolution

S/2017/968, which would have ensured that the JIM's activities conformed to the the high international standards of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which guarantee a genuinely impartial and professional investigation. The initiative was blocked by a number of delegations at the time. We want to rise above those differences and propose creating a new international investigative body that could establish the facts that the Security Council needs in order to identify those who used toxic substances as weapons, based on irreproachable, irrefutable information from transparent, credible sources. It must be professional and non-politicized. We have prepared a draft of such a resolution and ask that the Secretariat circulate it. We hope that Council members will study our initiative with their capitals as soon as possible. We are ready for substantive consultations.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): Russia has convened us with almost no notice, and then put forth a proposal that it hopes will distract from the new French initiative to hold accountable those who use chemical weapons. Today, Russia is again doing what it does best with regard to chemical weapons. It is running from the facts. It has the audacity to lecture the Security Council about how to stop the use of chemical weapons. I know that I have said this before, but it is worth repeating. In the past year, Russia exercised the right to veto three times to kill the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) in Syria. All by itself, Russia killed the Mechanism, which we had specifically tasked with identifying those responsible for using chemical weapons in Syria. Russia should look in the mirror before bringing us into the Security Council to talk about chemical weapons.

Earlier this week, we received yet another report that the Al-Assad regime had used chlorine gas on its own people. Dozens of civilians had to be treated for suffocation. Syrian children were literally gasping for breath as chlorine gas surrounded them. Of course, it is no coincidence that this week's chlorine-gas attack reportedly happened in the exact place that the Al-Assad regime is trying to take over militarily. We know that it resorts to such brutal tactics when it wants to retake territory, without any regard for innocent civilians, and we know that Russia has looked the other way for years while its Syrian friends use those despicable weapons of war. Russia is complicit in the Al-Assad regime's atrocities. Will the representative of the Russian Federation say anything at all today about the suffering caused by Al-Assad's barbaric tactics? Will it hold Al-Assad to account? Of course not. It never does.

It is therefore fitting that Russia brought us here on the same day that a new initiative on accountability for chemical weapons has been introduced in Paris. Today, France launched an international partnership against impunity for chemical weapons. We strongly support that effort and commend France for its leadership. More than 25 like-minded countries have come together to share and preserve information on who has used chemical weapons and to make sure that the perpetrators will be held accountable. Make no mistake — the United States, together with the Council, will continue to pursue those who have used chemical weapons to ensure that they are held accountable for their atrocities. Russia says that it has concerns about this French initiative to share evidence of the use of chemical weapons. That is no surprise. Russia opposed the Joint Investigative Mechanism because it collected facts about who used chemical weapons in Syria. Now Russia is questioning the French effort to collect facts on who used chemical weapons. What can we conclude?

To put it simply, when Russia does not like the facts, it tries to distract the conversation. That is because the facts come back over and over again to the truth that Russia wants to hide, which is that the Al-Assad regime continues to use chemical weapons against its own people. Today, Russia once again threw around many different accusations. Again, that is not surprising. Russia often puts out misleading and unfounded claims to confuse the conversation about chemical weapons. In fact, this happens so often that we recently wrote to the Security Council with a detailed assessment of Russia's misleading claims. The letter is public and available for anyone to see. We encourage everyone to take a look at it for themselves.

Here is the bottom line. The Security Council gave the Joint Investigative Mechanism a mandate to tell us who used chemical weapons in Syria. When investigators found the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham to be responsible, Russia was fine. When the investigators found that the Al-Assad regime had used them, Russia tried to find any excuse to poke holes in the investigation and threw up smoke to question the findings. But hat is not how independent investigations work. You do not get to question the findings when they do not go your way. We are therefore not going to accept any Russian proposal that undermines our

ability to get to the truth or that politicizes what must be an independent and impartial investigation. If the Russians want to work in good faith towards that goal, we are ready to re-establish the JIM, with its original, independent and impartial mandate, right now. But anything less is unacceptable.

To be crystal clear: the United States supports accountability for anyone who uses chemical weapons. We agree with Russia that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham must be held accountable for its use of such weapons, as the Joint Investigative Mechanism has found. But the difference between the United States and Russia is that we believe that no one should be let off the hook. Chemical weapons must never be used. Russia can continue to talk for as long as it wants about chemical weapons. It can bring it up in the Security Council Chamber as often as it wants. We welcome the debate. The United States and the international community will not be fooled. We remain steadfast in pursuing accountability for those who use chemical weapons. We stand strong in doing all we can to preserve the norm against their use. We remain forever committed to preserving the truth about what the Al-Assad regime has done in Syria and, sadly, what it will likely continue to do.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): We meet today after receiving news about another chemical attack in Syria — this time in Douma — which resulted in more than 20 victims, including women and children. Furthermore, the attack was penetrated in a de-escalation zone. We are closely following all available information. We expect that the international investigative mechanism in place — in particular the Fact-finding Mission — will shed light on the attack.

As we commemorate the one hundredth anniversary this year of the end of the First World War, during which chemical weapons produced on an industrial scale were used for the first time in history, repeated chemical-weapon attacks in Syria are an affront to the human conscience and a violation of the most fundamental norms of international law. The facts prove that the scourge continues to exist. Last year in Syria, on 4 April, more than 80 people, including women and children, were killed by a powerful nerve agent. Four years prior, 2,000 Syrian civilians were gassed in Ghouta with sarin gas. The use of chemical weapons was confirmed by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) clearly determined that the Syrian regime and Da'esh were responsible for those attacks. France itself independently confirmed that the Syrian regime was responsible for the attack perpetrated on 4 April. Since 2013, investigations have revealed more than 100 allegations of the use of chemical weapons, primarily in Syria but also in Iraq and Malaysia. Chlorine gas, sarin, mustard gas and VX — all deadly nerve agents — have returned to the forefront of the international arena a century after the horrors of the First World War. Gruesome images of the victims of such weapons of terror, which we thought we had long ago left behind, have also resurfaced. We cannot allow the use of such loathsome weapons to become commonplace. They destabilize entire regions and threaten everyone's security. They increase the risk of chemical terrorism, which we all fear. They also weaken the regime against chemical weapons as well as the entire non-proliferation regime. They undermine international law and call into question the outcome of international forums that have been held for decades.

That is why we must take action. We owe it to history; it is a responsibility we must shoulder together. Those of us who claim to be committed to the non-proliferation regime and helped to build it should bear that in mind. Let us be clear: those who hamper our efforts to combat impunity endorse de facto impunity for the perpetrators of such chemical attacks. They prevent us from deterring and bringing to justice those who participated in chemical-weapon programmes and those Governments and entities that give the orders to carry out attacks. We therefore cannot turn a blind eye and allow them to continue — and all the more so, and I repeat this, given that the chemical-weapon non-proliferation regime is the most developed and successful of all international non-proliferation regimes. Allowing it to be weakened without taking action would be tantamount to accepting the erosion of the entire non-proliferation regime on weapons of mass destruction, which we built together, step by step, over decades and which now serves as the backbone of the international security architecture and one of multilateralism's main accomplishments.

France has therefore proposed the establishment of a new international partnership to combat impunity for the use of chemical weapons by anyone — State and non-State actors alike. That partnership was launched yesterday in Paris at a conference convened by the

French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, at which representatives of 24 States were in attendance to reiterate their willingness to work together to counter the threat. I should like to mention just a few of the partnership's ambitious commitments. They include the transfer and sharing of information, when possible, about the perpetrators of attacks; a commitment to impose national or international sanctions against entities and individuals concerned; assistance for building State capacity with regard to designations and sanctions; and the publication of a single, consolidated list of the names of individuals involved in attacks. Criminals who claim responsibility for developing and using such barbaric weapons must know that they will not go unpunished. Once again, this is about the future of the entire collective security system. One should not be able to violate the most basic norms without eventually facing the consequences.

Owing to obstruction on the part of certain countries, we were unable to renew the JIM's mandate at the end of last year. Yesterday's consultations on Syria confirmed that an overwhelming majority of the members of the Security Council do not agree with the current impasse. In that regard, we take note of the proposal made today by Russia. We will consider it in the light of the principles I have just outlined.

The new partnership launched in Paris does not aim to replace international instruments and the investigative mechanism established by the United Nations and the OPCW. Instead, it seeks to complement and bolster that structure by making a new operational instrument available to the multilateral system and the international community. It will assist investigations and help the international justice system in its work. It is neither an anti-Syrian instrument nor an exclusive club of countries. All countries can join this pragmatic and open partnership by adhering to its statement of principles. Through the partnership, they will show their commitment to law, international stability, justice and security in order to end impunity for the perpetrators of chemical attacks and their accomplices. We must therefore work through the partnership to consolidate the regime prohibiting chemical weapons. The cornerstone of the partnership was laid in Paris and embodies our faith in effective and demanding multilateralism. In an effort to take immediate action, I can confirm that France has imposed asset-freezes on networks involved in the proliferation of chemical weapons in Syria.

In conclusion, I recall that there will be no justice or sustainable peace in Syria without putting an end to impunity. How can we continue to defend the regime and reiterate its willingness to speak in good faith and seek a political solution when that very same regime employs barbaric weapons against its own people? There has never been a larger gap between words and deeds. At the United Nations in both Vienna and Geneva, I said that we must work together to reach a political solution in Syria. Implementing an inclusive political solution as outlined in resolution 2254 (2015), which serves as our guidepost now more than ever, will depend upon a neutral environment in Syria guaranteed by the regime's clear commitment to credible constitutional change and democratic elections. It is the only way to permanently end the suffering of Syrians. We continue to believe that we can, and must, bring the Security Council together to proceed in that direction.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): When I heard today that Russia had called for an urgent meeting on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, I was glad that we could return to an issue on which the Council has a duty to ensure that those responsible are held to account. That duty is even more pressing today, because yet another heinous attack on civilians was reported yesterday to the Council by the Secretariat. In that attack, in Douma, in eastern Ghouta, at least 21 civilians were treated for symptoms consistent with exposure to chlorine. That followed another reported attack in eastern Ghouta on 13 January, affecting six people.

In 2016, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) found in three cases that the Syrian regime had used chlorine gas to attack civilians. Last year, it found that the regime had used sarin in Khan Shaykhun. Now, as the regime is escalating its attacks on eastern Ghouta in an attempt to force the besieged opposition to surrender, we remain deeply concerned about continuing reports of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. In all of this, we should not forget that it was the regime's 2013 attack on eastern Ghouta, using sarin, that led to the Council's adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), which had the clear, unanimously endorsed aim of disarming Syria's chemical-weapon programme.

Throughout that process, Russia has claimed to be acting as a leading Power, a guarantor. But when the Al-Assad regime deliberately ignored its obligation to stop using chemical weapons and continued to do so with careless regard for human life, Russia chose to

abuse its power of veto to protect that regime. Russia says that it supported the renewal of the JIM mandate and that it was the rest of us who killed it, because we could not agree with Russia's terms. Yet Russia's proposed draft resolution would have removed the JIM's ability to investigate the Al-Assad regime, which has been found responsible for multiple attacks. Russia has made it clear several times that it will not support a new investigative mechanism as long as it has the power to hold to account a State Member of the United Nations, and it seems, from a rapid reading of the latest text, that this proposal is another attempt to shift attention to non-State actors

The Russians have even claimed that Syria is a signatory in good standing to the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is not. It has not completed its declaration. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has repeatedly warned of inconsistencies, gaps and omissions. Russia has great influence over the Al-Assad regime. For the sake of the Syrian people and for preventing the future use of chemical weapons, we call on Russia to persuade its Syrian friends to get rid of their chemical weapons and comply fully with the Chemical Weapons Convention. By ending the JIM, Russia also stopped its investigations of chemical attacks by Da'esh. The investigators had found that those terrorists had carried out at least two such attacks. We condemn Da'esh unreservedly for its use of these vile weapons, which is yet another reason why we must defeat those terrorists once and for all.

The United Kingdom was proud to join the international partnership against impunity for the use of chemical weapons led by our French colleagues today in Paris. The use of chemical weapons is barbaric, illegal under international law and must stop. We must ensure that we can re-establish a mechanism to ensure accountability. We all know where the obstacle to that lies. In response, we will only redouble our efforts to pursue accountability for these crimes.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands is deeply shocked by the ongoing attacks using chemical weapons in Syria. The Secretariat briefed the Council yesterday on yet another alleged chemical-weapon attack, the second this month. Two surface-to-surface projectiles targeted eastern Ghouta, releasing what is suspected to be chlorine. The attack resulted in injuring 21 people through exposure to chlorine, of whom eight were men, six women and seven children. Furthermore, there are shocking estimates of 130 chemical attacks between 2012 and 2017, with more than 60 pending allegations of chemical-weapon use in Syria still to be investigated by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its Fact-finding Mission. The Netherlands condemns in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons by any State or non-State actor. I would now like to make three points.

First, accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria is neither optional nor negotiable. Secondly, it is unacceptable that four years after Syria joined the Chemical Weapons Convention, its declaration is still unable to be verified as accurate and complete. Thirdly, the Netherlands will use its membership of the Security Council to bring accountability to the fore. We regret the dismantling of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). We were convinced of the professionalism and independence of the JIM's work, and its results still stand. The Council should shoulder its responsibility in that regard. In particular, the countries on the Council with influence on Syria should use it with the Syrian regime to convince it to refrain from further chemical-weapon attacks, acknowledge its past use of such weapons and complete its chemical-weapon declaration.

As long as the Council remains deadlocked, our focus on accountability will not stop here. We will look for complementary measures so that impunity will not prevail. We therefore thank France for taking the initiative to establish an international partnership against impunity for the use of chemical weapons. The Netherlands participated in the meeting of the partnership that took place in Paris today. The Paris initiative aims to collect evidence of the use of chemical weapons anywhere in the world. It will enable States to take action to uphold the international norms against the use of chemical weapons. It represents a political commitment to increasing pressure on those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands is fully committed to that goal. Furthermore, the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011; the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic; and national prosecution in third countries, as well as sanctions, remain instrumental for achieving accountability for the crimes committed

against the Syrian people. We must use all the tools available to us to achieve accountability.

In conclusion, the Netherlands remains convinced that a referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court in The Hague is by far the best option for achieving accountability for the extremely serious crimes that have taken place in Syria.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): Yesterday the Council members were briefed by Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman on yet another alleged chemical-weapon attack in Syria. Allegations of the use of such weapons continue to be reported. There are some 60 cases of the reported use of chemical weapons in Syria that are currently being examined by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and that its Fact-finding Missions continue to investigate and report, including a case of a sarin attack in Lataminah in March of last year.

I would like to reiterate once again that Sweden condemns the use of chemical weapons in the strongest terms. It is a serious violation of international law and its use in armed conflict amounts to a war crime. Bringing the perpetrators of such crimes to justice remains a high priority. There must be no impunity for those responsible. That is why we participated in the meeting of the international partnership against impunity for the use of chemical weapons held today in Paris. As a member of the Council and the OPCW Executive Council, Sweden attaches great importance to all international efforts to combat the use and proliferation of chemical weapons by State and non-State actors alike, anywhere in the world. We trust that the French initiative will complement and support our collective work in multilateral forums, as well as the existing multilateral mechanisms to achieve unity around those important goals. That also includes the Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic, which play an important role in collecting information.

It was highly regrettable that the Council was not able to agree on an extension of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. It is a critical to establish a similar new impartial and independent attributive mechanism now. The Council needs to come back together and speak with one voice. We need to be forward-looking and overcome our differences with a view to protecting the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime and ensuring accountability. That should be possible if everyone engages seriously, constructively and genuinely in good faith. We stand ready to engage in such efforts in order for the Council to fully shoulder its responsibilities.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): We are deeply concerned about the reported use of chemical weapons in eastern Ghouta, which is in clear violation of international law and deserves condemnation in the strongest possible terms. This alleged use of chemical weapons, as with other incidents, including in Talmenes, demonstrates the need to hold perpetrators accountable. There is no space for impunity in this regard.

We support taking all the necessary measures to fill the gap left by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, so as to ensure that no one goes unpunished for using chemical weapons, which cause unacceptable harm and suffering. Those responsible for chemical attacks must realize that they will be held accountable because their acts are an affront to all humankind and the basic rules of civilization.

We support the tireless work done by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We are convinced that it is the responsibility of the Security Council to establish and maintain a suitable institution to investigate alleged cases of the use of chemical weapons.

Let me take this opportunity to thank France for today's hosting of a high-level meeting to launch a new initiative to protect the core values underpinning the credibility of the non-proliferation regime on chemical weapons established by the Chemical Weapons Convention. Poland joined that new partnership with the sole purpose of using all the tools at our disposal to end impunity for those responsible for chemical attacks and to promote and complement existing standards and mechanisms against the use of chemical weapons. We look forward to working on this issue in the Council in the months to come.

Mr. Tenya (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council has the highly sensitive responsibility of contributing to the prevention of the use of chemical weapons, which entails identifying and prosecuting those responsible for atrocities such as the one perpetrated yesterday in Syria.

Peru participated in the meeting convened by France today to establish a partnership to combat impunity for the use of chemical weapons, at which a declaration of principles was adopted. The document sets out a series of measures aimed at ensuring that individuals and entities responsible for the use of chemical weapons are brought to justice. During that meeting, Peru's Ambassador to France referred in particular to paragraph 3 of the terms of reference, which had been circulated in advance, wherein it is expressly stated that the purpose of the initiative is not in any way meant to replace, reproduce or supersede international inquiry and investigation mechanisms that serve the same purpose. Our Ambassador also expressed his satisfaction with those words, insofar as Peru, as a member of the Security Council and a member of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, encourages the necessary action to be taken by those competent bodies.

Peru condemns in the strongest possible terms the lack of accountability in the continuing incidents involving chemical weapons in Syria, for we believe it undermines international regimes on the matter and weakens peace efforts in the region.

Mr. Shen Bo (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China expresses its grave concern about the use of chemical weapons in Syria and extends its deepest sympathy to the Syrian people for their suffering.

China's position on chemical weapons has been clear and consistent. We firmly oppose the use of chemical weapons by any country, group or individual for any purpose and under any circumstances. The use of chemical weapons is unacceptable, whenever or wherever they are used. China supports a comprehensive, objective and fair investigation into such incidents in order to arrive at a conclusion that can stand the test of time and to shed light on the facts in order to bring the perpetrators to justice.

China welcomes the draft resolution circulated by the delegation of the Russian Federation that would establish a new investigative mechanism on Syrian chemical weapons. China appreciates the efforts made by Russia in the Security Council to continue to advance the work on the Syrian chemical weapons issue. China will seriously study the draft resolution and actively participate in consultations on it.

It is imperative to establish a new investigative mechanism to find out the truth and to deter further use of chemical weapons in Syria. We hope that Council members will participate in the consultations in a constructive manner and strive to reach consensus on the establishment of a new mechanism.

The Syrian chemical weapons issue is closely linked to a political settlement to the Syrian question, and it requires a comprehensive, balanced and integrated approach. China supports the role of the Security Council and of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons as the main channel for achieving an appropriate resolution to the Syrian chemical weapons issue. We hope that all the relevant parties will adopt a constructive attitude and seek appropriate solutions during consultations. We must maintain the unity of the Council and coordinate with the relevant parties in an effort to actively promote the political process in Syria.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia reiterates its strong, categorical condemnation of the use of chemical weapons and chemical substances as weapons as unjustifiable and criminal acts — wherever, whenever and by whomever they are committed. We believe that there can be no justification for the use of such weapons, regardless of the circumstances and of who uses them, as it constitutes a serious crime under international law and a threat to international peace and security. We emphatically condemn the reported use of chemical weapons in the city of Douma, in eastern Ghouta. That incident must be investigated in order to identify the perpetrators, bring them to justice and ensure that their actions do not go unpunished.

Accordingly, we reiterate our support for the work carried out by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. However, as we have stated on other occasions, we emphasize the urgent need for an investigative mechanism with a clear mandate that can carry out its assigned tasks of investigating methodically, transparently, technically, faithfully, with assistance and in a fundamentally depoliticized way. We must have a mechanism that can develop an independent, impartial, complete and conclusive investigation to hold accountalbe those responsible for such horrific crimes.

We believe that, if what we want is an independent and transparent mechanism, we have the challenge of not exploiting the Security Council by bringing geopolitical interests on the ground into the Chamber. We have

the challenge of demonstrating to the international community the unity of the Council. To that end, we must not turn the Chamber into a sounding board for warring confrontation and, even less so, transfer the immediate interests of the battlefield to this setting.

In that regard, we welcome the proposal put forward by the Russian Federation today. We will study the text, and we hope that consultations will be convened as soon as possible and that they will result in the Council and the international community having on an independent investigation mechanism.

It is essential that we overcome the lack of trust that exists in the Council. Furthermore, we must always bear in mind that no initiative, however well intended, should supplant our responsibilities, as established by the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): The ongoing use of chemical weapons in Syria represents one of the deplorable elements of this crisis, which has been continuing for seven years. It is all the more deplorable when we see that there is an absence of justice and accountability and that there is impunity for every criminal who has contributed to and participated in such crimes against civilians.

Following the attack when chemical weapons were used in Ghouta, where most of the victims were civilians, we witnessed the unity of the Council in ensuring that such a crime would not be repeated and that perpetrators would be held accountable through the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013). However, unfortunately, we note that there are still reports of chemical attacks in Syria, most recently by Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, yesterday regarding a chemical attack on the city of Duma on 13 January.

We would therefore like to express our disappointment that the Security Council has been unable to reach consensus on renewing the mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, which, we believe, carried out its work in a professional, impartial and independent way. As a result, the failure to renew the mandate meant the complete absence of a tool for accountability in Syria. For that reason, the perpetrators of such crimes will go unpunished and there is no guarantee of holding them, or any perpetrator of such crimes in future, accountable.

The State of Kuwait has a firm, principled position strongly condemning any use of chemical weapons at any time, anywhere and by anyone, since the use of chemical weapons is a grave violation of international law. We underscore the need to hold perpetrators — individuals, entities, non-State groups or Governments — accountable. As members of the Security Council, we are responsible for maintaining international peace and security. We must therefore seek alternatives and mechanisms, agreeable to all members of the Security Council, to ensure the independence, impartiality and professionalism of any new future mechanism to ensure that criminals are held accountable.

We note that there is a draft resolution before us on establishing a new mechanism. We recall the clear and decisive language in resolution 2118 (2013), which stipulates the need to hold accountable those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. In that regard, the State of Kuwait welcomes the French initiative to convene the Paris meeting on an international partnership against impunity for use of chemical weapons. Along with a number of countries, the State of Kuwait participated in that event to underscore the importance of strengthening the values of justice and accountability and to implement the principle of ending impunity. We support the international mechanisms established by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council to gather evidence regarding any crimes related to human rights violations in Syria.

In conclusion, we emphasize that it is important for the Security Council to stand united when dealing with issues that threaten international peace and security, such as the incidents mentioned in reports on the Syrian crisis, through the unanimous adoption of such resolutions as resolution 2118 (2013), on chemical weapons; resolution 2165 (2014), on the humanitarian situation; and resolution 2254 (2015), on the political track of the Syrian crisis.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks the Russian Federation for having called for this emergency meeting of the Security Council with a view to once again discussing the issue of the use of chemical weapons in general, and in Syria in particular, where, it seems, that atrocious weapon is being used.

My country, which is opposed to the use of chemical weapons, ratified the Convention on the Prohibition

of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction in order to show the world our determination to work with other international stakeholders for the complete elimination of such weapons. To that end, on this very day, 23 January, we signed in Paris the declaration of principles, issued by the meeting held at the initiative of France on the topic of combating impunity through the international partnership against impunity for the use of chemical weapons.

Côte d'Ivoire extends its full support to that initiative and vehemently condemns any use of chemical weapons, regardless of the reasons or perpetrators. In firm support of the values of equity and justice, Côte d'Ivoire wishes to draw the attention of the Security Council to the need to set up a new consensus mechanism aimed at combating the use of chemical weapons.

In that regard, we welcome the Russian initiative to propose the establishment, by means of a resolution, of a new mechanism. We assume that such a mechanism, like the previous one, would be tasked with identifying perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons, in general. In the specific case of Syria, the perpetrators of such acts must be identified and be held accountable for their actions. Inaction by the Council on this important issue would be a bad sign and send a message of encouragement to those who indulge in the use of chemical weapons with impunity.

To conclude, my delegation calls on the Council to act in a consensus-based and coordinated manner in order to establish a new mechanism, for our action must prompt us not only to protect and to help victims, who are martyrs in the endless war in Syria, but also to work to uphold international peace and security.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): The use of chemical weapons, the issue we are considering is critically important to the Republic of Equatorial Guinea. We categorically repudiate and condemn their use by any country, State or non-State actor. We also condemn in the strongest terms the recent chemical-weapon attacks in Syria. With regard to the issue of who is responsible for the use of such weapons, there is no consensus among the members of the Security Council on that. We realize that the Security Council must address the issue of the use of chemical weapons in a spirit of understanding and unanimity, with a view to combating impunity, thereby sending an unambiguous message to anyone who has used such weapons or is thinking of doing so that they will be held responsible for their actions. We repeat that we categorically condemn the production, stockpiling and use of chemical and other weapons of mass destruction.

If we are to take steps against those who have used such weapons, we must clearly identify the responsible parties in a way that leaves no room for doubt. That is why, given the lack of consensus among the members of the Council and the need to identify those responsible for the use of such weapons, we are of the view that the proposal that the Russian Federation has just made is worth considering as a new opportunity for conducting a fully transparent investigation whose results all Council members would have to accept, thereby fostering the unanimity and consensus within the Council that would enable it to take the necessary steps against the perpetrators of the heinous act of using chemical weapons.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the representative of Kazakhstan.

We are deeply worried about the fact that chemical weapons continue to be used in Syria. It is regrettable that this inhuman and illegal type of weapon is being used with the specific purpose of intimidating ordinary people, since it mostly affects unprotected civilians. Another discouraging fact is the lack of unity and the deepening confrontation among the parties on the chemical dossier, which complicates our ability to address this threat in an appropriate way. It is therefore urgent to start thinking about developing a new investigative tool that can effectively counter all such chemical crimes. Any delay or inaction on the part of the Council could lead to an increase in the commission of such acts in the absence of clear plans and mechanisms to end impunity.

We welcome the Russian Federation's proposal to establish a new mechanism, giving us a new opportunity to look into the matter. Since we will have to start over with the creation of an investigative mechanism, we must try to get it right from the very beginning, on a basis of consensus. The mechanism should be impartial, depoliticized, professional, representative, and with a clear mandate that will preclude any doubts and ensure the credibility of its work. That does not mean that we think the previous mechanism was unfit for its purpose, but it is obvious that accountability requires a Security Council that is united in its decision-making.

Kazakhstan is ready to contribute and to assist in finding the best way to move forward together.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I am taking the floor to further clarify our position. It is a pity that my friend Mrs. Haley has left the Chamber. She mentioned that we convened this meeting today on short notice, for which I apologize. As I recall, however, we have frequently been convened by Mrs. Haley's call, and we are ready to do it again. Please let her know that I am doing it because I am always very pleased to see her here.

Once again, everything that we heard from the United States in its statement today was about Russia. The fact that it is rejecting our proposed draft resolution from the get-go says a great deal. It once again betrays a truth that we are sadly familiar with. The United States has no need of any independent professional mechanism. It is not only betraying a truth, it is betraying itself in the eyes of the international community. Let me say straight out what I spoke about before in a rhetorical question. It was no accident that the allegations — which will remain allegations until they are confirmed — about the use of chemical weapons in eastern Ghouta emerged on the eve of some important political events for Syria, the meeting in Vienna and the Syrian national dialogue conference in Sochi. Furthermore, I will say it again, why does the United States need an investigative mechanism when both yesterday and today, before any kind of investigation, it asserted, without apparently a shadow of doubt, that it was the Syrian Government that did it? It has taken the role of both judge and prosecutor.

Does the United States at least understand that it is betraying itself by this? If it genuinely wants to establish a professional, independent attributive mechanism, it should at least read the draft resolution before rejecting it. Did we not discuss a new mechanism with Council members of the Council at the conclusion of the multiple acts in the political spectacle surrounding the closure of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism? We did not time our draft resolution to coincide with any events or partnerships.

However, I want to reiterate something that I spoke about at a Council meeting presided over by President Nazarbayev on 18 January, which is that no commissions, partnerships or so-called independent mechanisms in this area can be legitimate unless they are approved by the Security Council. That must be our premise. I would like to echo what the Permanent Representative of Sweden — and he was not the only one — said in his statement, which is that we must overcome our differences, engage in dialogue and try to restore the Council's lost unity. That is the aim of our proposal.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.